

## West Africa's first coup

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## West Africa's first coup: neo-colonial and pan-African projects in Togo's "shadow archives"

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**100 word abstract:** Early in the morning of 13 January 1963, the president of the Republic of Togo was shot outside the United States embassy in the capital city of Lomé, and his government was overthrown. This article traces accounts of these events, and responses to them, as they appear in Togo's "shadow archives". It re-evaluates three competing explanations of the assassination and coup, and outlines the implications of this re-evaluation for the study of neo-colonial and pan-African projects in postcolonial Africa.

**10 key words:** Ghana, Togo, France, United States, assassination, coup, diplomatic relations, neo-colonialism, pan-Africanism, archives.

### 1. Introduction

Early in the morning of 13 January 1963, the president of the Republic of Togo was shot outside the United States embassy in the capital city of Lomé. Some of the ministers in Sylvanus Olympio's government had been arrested a few hours beforehand, whilst others fled across the border to neighbouring Dahomey. Three days later, Olympio's long-time political opponent, Nicolas Grunitzky, was made provisional president of Togo, and announced that he would form a coalition government until elections could be held. West Africa's first coup was well underway.

In the immediate aftermath, three different explanations circulated between African heads of state and foreign ministers; through the embassies of the various nations that had diplomatic representation in Togo, and back to their respective home governments; and in the local and international media. The first, "military / non-ideological", explanation emphasised the role of the discontented but fundamentally a-political Togolese soldiers and ex-servicemen, who toppled the Olympio regime in order to secure better conditions from a more nervous and thus more accommodating successor government. The

second, “neo-colonial”, explanation pointed to discreet but calculated French complicity in the actions of the soldiers and ex-servicemen, and invoked France’s longstanding preference for Grunitzky over Olympio. The third explanation located the key causes not in Lomé or in Paris, but in the neighbouring country, Ghana, and the agendas of its first president, Kwame Nkrumah. Proponents of this explanation invoked the hostile public communication between the two presidents, and Nkrumah’s statement that Togo could become the “seventh region” of Ghana.<sup>1</sup>

The events of 13 January 1963 remain an unresolved murder mystery. Over the past half-century, many people have asked “who dunnit”, or indeed “who was behind it”, and none of their answers has been proved beyond reasonable doubt. In this article, then, I approach the Olympio assassination as crucial element in a historiographical puzzle, and highlight what a re-evaluation of events in Togo can teach us about the study of contemporary African history. Taking a cue from investigations of “sanctioned forgetting” and the “construction of ignorance” around particular historical events and actors (Allman 2009: 13; Proctor & Schiebinger 2008), my starting point is agnotological: I want to know why each of the three potential explanations that circulated in 1963 has been taken up or disregarded by particular people at particular moments in time. The article then goes on develop a new interpretation of the assassination and coup, and outline the implications of this interpretation for the study of national sovereignty, neo-colonialism, and pan-African solidarity in postcolonial Africa.

Regardless of whether the “military / non-ideological” explanation was valid or accurate, it was extremely convenient – for the new provisional government in Togo, which wished to avoid an international enquiry; for at least two other governments (Ghana and France) which wished to shut down accusations of complicity in the assassination; and for “friendly” western governments (such as West Germany and the United States) which hoped for particular outcomes but were anxious about over-commitment. It is clear that many Togolese, and many Africans in nearby countries (including some ambassadors, foreign ministers, and heads of state), did not find the “military / non-ideological” explanation convincing. An examination of these various suspicions about French and Ghanaian complicity, suggests that, regardless of their validity or accuracy, these suspicions had important consequences - for the legitimacy of the new Togo government at home, for its relations with other states, and for competing visions of pan-African unity. This re-interpretation of the assassination and the coup comes with disciplinary, methodological and historiographical implications, and establishes an agenda for future research.

Political scientists were the first academics to take up each of the three explanations that circulated among politicians, diplomats, and journalists in 1963. Contemporary historians, however, should not limit themselves to the re-testing of old political-scientific interpretations against new evidence that has since come to light. The explanatory frameworks of later twentieth-century

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<sup>1</sup> Nkrumah made this statement in a speech at Keta, near the Ghana-Togo border, on 29 October 1959.

political science are themselves ripe for critique – in some cases because they are so obviously inflected by Cold War worldviews (Grilli 2018: 24, in relation to Thompson 1969), and in other cases because they are grounded in deductive reasoning.

Togo is a very small country, which had population of less than 2 million at Independence in 1960. Very few political scientists were interested in Togo *per se*. But as the 1963 coup in Togo was soon followed by a series of other coups across the continent, it had to be included as a “case” in comparative analyses. Whilst Decalo (1976) noted some of Togo’s intriguing particularities, in quantitative analyses (such as that of Jenkins & Kposowa 1990), Togo was but a small component of the empirical fodder for the “military centrality theory” of coups. This emphasised the “strong corporate identity” of African militaries, along with their size and resources relative to weak civilian institutions, to explain their propensity to act against governments that threatened their corporate interests (Jenkins & Kposowa 1990: 861-2). Even within the discipline of political science, this theory was subject to numerous challenges (Luckham 1994), while recent publications on Togo politics have acknowledged the pitfalls of forcing scant country data into models or ideal types derived from elsewhere (Osei 2018).

My earlier research followed the thinking and practice of many other historians of modern and contemporary Africa: oral history was critical to the de-centering of “western” political-scientific theories and the re-centering of the ideas and experiences of African protagonists in political mobilisations and events (Skinner 2015). But this methodological stance was not easily transferable to research on the Olympio assassination and the 1963 coup. This is partly a matter of timing. The older protagonists in these events are long gone - Grunitzky, for example, died in 1969. Even one of the youngest protagonists, sergeant Etienne Eyadéma, died more than a decade ago, in 2005.

Many historians of contemporary Africa find that their methodological inclination for oral history is challenged by the passage of time. But in Togo, particular political sensitivities also arise. It has been possible for me to carry out other kinds of research in and on Togo, including collaborative research which aims to center African-authored and African-language texts in the era of new nationhood (Skinner & Yayoh, forthcoming). But in the context of civil unrest in Togo in 2017 and 2018, I became wary of implicating individuals in a study of the 1963 assassination and coup. This article has therefore been written from documentary sources that are available in public repositories, and I bear responsibility for the interpretation of those sources.

This decision brought me into a direct confrontation with the dispersion and discontinuities of Africa’s postcolonial archives. Since the establishment of the University of Lomé in 1970, a strong commitment to national history has generated an impressive body of research on Togo, particularly on pre-colonial migration and settlement, colonial economy and administration, and anti-colonial resistance (as collated in Nicoué Gayibor’s multi-volume *Histoire des Togolais*). But the collections of the Togolese national archives are

overwhelmingly derived from the era of colonial administration. Archivists pointed to the absence of any law that compelled governmental bodies to deposit their documentation. Requests for the 1963 files of the foreign ministry and the office of the president were sympathetically received but could not be fulfilled. The assassination and coup formed a critical turning point in Togo's history as an independent nation, yet the events cannot be readily reconstructed from the national archives.

This kind of situation is hardly unique to Togo. Ochonu, reflecting upon his experiences in Nigeria, suggested that there are two forms of archival fragmentation: that which arises from "bureaucratic dysfunction", and that which arises because "postcolonial history is a charged terrain carrying high stakes". This "activates the human tendency to strategically mutilate information that can be weaponized, metaphorically speaking, by one's rivals and by contending forces" (2015: 290). Straussberger concluded that whilst there had been at least two periods of "systematic destruction" of governmental documentation in Guinea, "the mutilation of archives followed pre-existing geographies of power" (2015: 303). Ironically, local archives in locations where the reach of the Guinean central state was limited, had managed to retain more of the documentary artefacts of governance. Bernault embraced "the poetics of oddities" (2015: 269), suggesting how archival gaps and absences might give rise to the intensive and innovative study of fragments. This article, however, winds its way through a "vast shadow archive" (Allman 2009: 127) of deposits located outside of Togo.

Despite Togo's small size, many nations established diplomatic relations in the immediate aftermath of Independence. The French, West German and United States governments all had embassies in Togo, whilst the British had a high commission. These records have been collected, catalogued and made available in public archives in their respective countries.<sup>2</sup> A reliance on these embassy records is potentially problematic, because it may center the concerns of "western" diplomats, who were troubled by Olympio's tense relationship to the former colonial power, and therefore tracked his attempts to diversify Togo's sources of material and diplomatic support. Togo's dependency in a context of Cold War competition runs through many of these records, and thus the reader must constantly ask him/herself what such preoccupations may have obscured.

But it possible to read "western" embassy records from other angles. Embassies served as conduits from each African posting to the home government, where information was factored into (or strategically marginalised from) foreign policy. Information also travelled also back out again, to other African postings. Ambassadors in neighbouring African countries therefore partook in exchanges of information. But given that each ambassador engaged with, and sought information from, political figures in his/her *own* posting, ambassadors who

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<sup>2</sup> I have worked directly with the records of the US embassy and the UK high commission, and with digital copies of the French and West German embassy records. Whilst I can read the French records without assistance, I relied on a translator for help with the West German records. In this article, for reasons of space, I focus on the US and French sources.

served the same home government did not necessarily share the same perspective on relations *between* African states.

Some of these dynamics in diplomats' generation and exchange of information have been highlighted in recent studies of African liberation movements in exile (Roberts 2017). In the case of Togo, it is significant that Britain, France, West Germany, and the United States all had diplomatic representation in neighbouring Ghana, including during the period between Togolese independence and the assassination of Olympio, during which there was no Ghanaian embassy in Togo. The vast criss-crossing network of diplomatic communication around the African continent and across the Atlantic ocean opens up several perspectives on relations *between* African states in the era of new nationhood. When scholars are able to read across linguistic divides in the "western" records, and/or place them into dialogue with fragmentary records in African countries, they create new opportunities to illuminate both neo-colonial and pan-African projects.

It is important for historians to pursue these opportunities because the current historiography is heavily concentrated on Ghana. This is logical and understandable. Upon its independence in 1957, Ghana became a beacon of hope – for people of African descent in the Atlantic diaspora, and for colonised peoples on the continent and beyond. Historians have been intrigued by Nkrumah's transcontinental political trajectory (Ahlman 2017: 29-48; Adi 2000; Sherwood 1996); the mobilisation of African-American support for Ghana within the United States foreign policy apparatus (Grimm 2013); the movement of African-Americans to independent Ghana (Gaines 2006); and shared anti-nuclear and pro-peace projects (Allman 2008).

In 1958, the Conference of Independent States and the All-African Peoples' Conference positioned Accra as a hub for anti-colonial thought and activism (Grilli 2018; Ahlman 2010). Studies of the Sawaba movement in Niger (van Walraven 2013) and the Union des Populations du Cameroun (Terretta 2013) have highlighted the support offered by Nkrumah's Ghana to freedom fighters fleeing oppressive colonial, settler, and puppet regimes. This points to the generative nature of political exile for pan-African solidarities (Adi 2012; see also Carpenter & Lawrance 2018). The recent recovery and cataloguing of the records of the Nkrumah's Bureau of African Affairs has been particularly exciting, for it provides new opportunities to develop "an Africa-centred perspective in understanding the international position of the continent" (Gerits 2015: 964; see also Grilli 2017).

Togo, by contrast, has been marginal to this historiography. Twenty-first century studies of Nkrumah's political thought, and of Ghana's foreign and pan-African policy, have accorded relatively little weight to Ghana-Togo / Nkrumah-Olympio relations (Poe 2003; Armah 2004; Rahman 2007; Biney 2011; Ahlman 2017). Togo has also been marginal to recent histories of Africa and the Cold War (Schmidt 2013), and features only as a minor example of President John F. Kennedy's 'personal diplomacy' in Muelhenbeck's (2012) re-assessment of 1960s US Africa policy. This is also logical and understandable, given that Togo

was a very small country, and a relatively minor player on the African continental stage.

But the assassination of Togo's first president was not a minor event. Nor was West Africa's first coup. The "military / non-ideological" explanation glossed over the intense suspicions of African ambassadors, foreign ministers and heads of state. In exposing its expediency, this article speaks back to a Ghana-focussed literature on neo-colonialism and pan-Africanism, and provides an alternative perspective on relations between African states. Whilst it is not possible to provide an exhaustive analysis of all the ramifications, the article outlines an agenda for further research.

## 2. *An accidental assassination?*

In its first issue to be released after the coup (19 January 1963), *West Africa* magazine's front page report pinpointed the causes with a surprising degree of certainty: "It is now plain...that the military junta who murdered [Olympio] were inflamed by their own real and imagined grievances, and those of Togo's ex-servicemen. Their claim to have had 'no religious or philosophical ideology' seems only too true." The magazine's correspondent in Lomé went on to raise the possibility that the soldiers who shot Olympio did not actually set out to kill him, but had somehow done so in the heat of the moment: "Soldiers' grievances about pay and unemployment among ex-servicemen were the immediate cause of the *coup d'état* in Lomé on Sunday – of which an unplanned result was the death of President Olympio." The proof of the pudding, suggested the correspondent, was in the eating, for the soldiers got what they wanted. At a press conference just three days after the coup, Grunitzky announced that his new coalition government would treble the size of the Togolese army in order to accommodate the demands of "1,000 demobilized French colonial troops", whose "anger at being abandoned amongst the unemployed" was, in the view of the correspondent, "chiefly responsible for the crisis" (*West Africa* 19 January 1963: 59).

The notion that Olympio's death was unintended had already been called into question by the time the *West Africa* report was published. On 15 January 1963, in an exclusive interview with two journalists (Prendergast for *Time-Life*, and Chauvel for *Figaro*), one Sargent Etienne Eyadéma stated that he personally had shot the president.<sup>3</sup> Later the same day, the insurrectionary committee held a press conference, at which it was announced that Olympio had indeed been shot, *but only because he had tried to escape* – a reason which Eyadéma had not given earlier that day.<sup>4</sup> The small but significant discrepancy between the two accounts quickly gave rise to speculation.

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<sup>3</sup> National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), College Park, Maryland. Record Group 59, Box 1949, File 770.D.11/6-862 Defense. Leon Poullada, US embassy, Lomé, to US State Department, 16 Jan 1963, reporting on Eyadéma's interview with the journalists on 15 Jan 1963.

<sup>4</sup> NARA, RG 59, Box 4070, Pol 27 Military operations Togo. 'History of a coup d'état', 23 Jan 1963, compiled by US embassy staff in Lomé.

Later, US embassy records revealed that, on the morning of 13 January 1963, US Vice Consul Richard Storch had looked down upon the scene from a window in a building across the street.<sup>5</sup> Storch's account suggested that at 7.10am, Olympio had been standing near the US embassy gate wearing only shorts and a vest, in a street guarded by soldiers from whom he was not attempting to escape.<sup>6</sup> The doctor who dealt with the body indicated that Olympio had been bayoneted as well as shot – a combination of wounds that can only have been inflicted deliberately.<sup>7</sup> News reports that described Olympio's death as accidental, then, were immediately called into question, and they became further discredited over time. Olympio's death meets Mazrui's (1968: 42-5) criteria for the term "assassination" – the victim was a political figure, whose death was linked to the use of force to influence the structure, composition, or policy of the government.

The theory that the coup was instigated by soldiers - in pursuit of their own interests, and without regard to "ideology" - was later taken up by Decalo (1976) in his influential study of *Coups and Army Rule in Africa*. By this point, the shock that had accompanied the events of January 1963 in Togo had ebbed away. Political scientists recognised that approximately half of Africa's states were controlled by "military or civil-military cliques" (Decalo 1976: 2). Decalo was frustrated by analysts' continued emphasis on the systemic weaknesses of African states, and by a naïve belief in the justifications of anti-corruption and national unity that military leaders usually offered for their coups. He insisted that the real explanation lay in "the internal dynamics of African military hierarchies, their officer cliques, and corporate and personal ambitions" (1976: xii). The coup in Togo was not only the first in West Africa; for Decalo it held the key to understanding a pattern across the continent.

Decalo noted certain common features of Africa's post-colonial armies which, he argued, undermined their capacity to act as national institutions governed by values of discipline and unity, and produced instead "coterie[s] of distinct armed camps owing primary clientelist allegiance to a handful of mutually competitive officers" (1976: 5). Ethnic imbalance was one of these common features, which certainly pertained to Togo, with its notorious north-south, Eve-Kabre divide. But Decalo also clarified one respect in which Togo was distinct. Whereas in most of their African colonies, the French had recruited and conscripted soldiers into *troupes coloniales*, in Togoland (which had been administered under a United Nations trusteeship agreement), the French could only raise "volunteer contingents" (United Nations 1946: article 4B). Like other presidents in francophone West Africa, then, Olympio had to create a new national army upon

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<sup>5</sup> Storch's account, along with those of Olympio's wife, Dina, and the US ambassador, Leon Poullada, were highlighted in a special report by *Black* magazine in May and June 1985. Verschave (1998: 111) indicates that these US embassy records first became available in 1983, but our own searches of this set of records revealed that other files had not become available until 1995.

<sup>6</sup> NARA, RG 59, Box 1949, File 770.D.11/6-862 Defense. Confidential memorandum, 'Death of the President' by Richard Storch, 15 Jan 1963.

<sup>7</sup> NARA, RG 59, Box 4070, Pol 27 Military operations Togo. Ambassador Leon Poullada to US State Department, 25 Jan 1963, reflecting upon the Storch memorandum and the doctor's report – although a copy of the latter is not included in the file.



the achievement of Independence. But the status of the Togolese soldiers available to him became a matter of contention.

Adhering firmly to the principles of fiscal discipline, Olympio insisted that, in an independent Republic of Togo, the armed forces must be affordable. And as the country's population was then well under 2 million, and its economy was heavily reliant on a handful of primary exports, he also decided that the armed forces should be very small. In 1963, the Togolese army consisted of a single infantry battalion of about 250 men, whilst the *gendarmerie* and the *Garde togolaise* were responsible for diverse aspects of public order and national security.<sup>8</sup> Whilst the serving soldiers' interests were difficult to square with Olympio's approach to military expenditure, those who resented it most were the "volunteers" who were returning from active service in French colonial campaigns – particularly that in Algeria, which came to an end following the Evian Accords of March 1962.<sup>9</sup>

The Togolese ex-servicemen waited impatiently for their pensions to be paid by the French government. In addition to financial hardship and the stigma that attached to their role in suppressing anti-colonial movements elsewhere, these soldiers – who had accumulated considerable combat experience – now faced the prospect that Olympio would refuse to integrate them into a second Togolese infantry battalion and thereby render them unemployed. The ex-servicemen thus had both the means and the motive to act against Olympio and his government, and the serving soldiers had reasons to support them.

However, although the *West Africa* correspondent clearly favoured this "military / non-ideological" explanation, not everyone was convinced the soldiers were acting on their own account. President Sekou Touré of Guinea, appealing for a United Nations investigation, described the assassination and coup as a "hideous plot knowingly hatched from outside" (*Africa Report* 1 February 1963: 8) whilst the Nigerian foreign minister Jaja Wachuku informed a press conference in Lagos that Olympio's demise was "achieved, directed, organised and financed by 'somebody'" (*West Africa* 26 January 1963: 103).

### 3. A neo-colonial conspiracy?

Several decades later, in *La Françafrique*, Verschave (1998) assembled a diverse range of evidence that linked soldierly interests and ambitions in Togo to a sinister record of French neo-colonial intervention across Africa, and the shadowy figure of Jacques Foccart. As head of the secretariat of African affairs under Presidents de Gaulle and Pompidou, Foccart built up a network of informants in the military bases, counter-espionage posts, and policing services that France "provided" to its former African colonies and trust territories under a series of Independence-era "co-operation agreements" (Bat 2010; Ayache 1983:

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<sup>8</sup> A description of these forces can be found in NARA, RG 59, Box 4070, Pol 27 Military operations Togo. "History of a coup d'état", 23 January 1963, compiled by US embassy staff in Lomé.

<sup>9</sup> We use the term "volunteer" in quotation marks because whilst these men were not conscripted in a formal sense, they may still have been subjected to a range of pressures.

42; Luckham 1982). After spending the mid-1970s to mid-1990s in the political wilderness, Foccart was rehabilitated as an advisor on Africa to President Chirac. Foccart told his story (Gaillard 1995-7) and thereby generated evidence for renewed journalistic and academic critiques.

Tracing Foccart's connections between Paris and Lomé, Verschave (1998: 109 and 119) concluded that both the French ambassador, Henri Mazoyer, and the security adviser, Georges Maïtrier, had been selected as part of a broader strategy to monitor and contain Olympio in his efforts to steer Togo on "too independent" a course. Highlighting Maïtrier's direct communication with insurrectionists Robert Adewi, Emmanuel Bodjollé and Etienne Eyadéma in the days before the coup, Verschave built the case that the security failures of 12/13 January 1963 were neither unanticipated nor accidental. Verschave (1998: 119) noted Adewi's (uncorroborated and post facto) claim that Maïtrier had asked Eyadéma to get rid of Olympio in exchange for a cash payment. He also quoted members of Olympio's household, who said that the soldiers who forced entry to the residence on the night of 12/13 January had used the telephone to inform Mazoyer that the president was not there (1998: 112 and 116). Verschave left open the possibility that Foccart was interested only in the demise of Olympio's government, and had not wanted or ordered an assassination (1998: 121). But he was clear that whilst the soldiers may well have thought they were serving their own interests, they had acted with the complicity of Mazoyer and Maïtrier, and thus, albeit indirectly, of Foccart.

Vershave's analysis was taken up by the Togolese historian, Tété-Adjalo (2002), in the third of his three-volume account of Togo's struggle for *Ablɔde* (freedom). Tété-Adjalo argued that, in pursuing fiscal discipline, reducing reliance on French budgetary subventions, avoiding the accumulation of loans, and pushing for an "open door" policy on imports, Olympio was setting his tiny republic on the path to economic independence; and, had Olympio lived long enough to succeed, his example would have threatened the very basis of French engagement with its former African colonies. According to Tété-Adjalo, Franco-Togolese relations reached their nadir in late 1962 when Olympio made public his plans to take Togo out of the franc zone, and this was the "first, second and third" factor behind the assassination (2002: 111).

The subsequent turn of events in Togo seemed to reinforce different elements of the "military / non-ideological" and "neo-colonial" explanations. In 1967, Etienne (later Gnassingbé) Eyadéma undertook another coup and thereby inaugurated his own 38-year hold on power. For Decalo (1990), the connections were as follows: having claimed the "credit" for pulling the trigger on Olympio, Eyadéma recognised that if the pro-Olympio politicians should ever form a government again, he [Eyadéma] would be put on trial for murder. Self-preservation thus compelled Eyadéma firstly to seize power himself when the Grunitzky administration began to falter, and subsequently to retain power by staving off pro-democracy protests. Verschave (1998), on the other hand explained Eyadéma's long hold on power as part of a deliberate and sustained neo-colonial strategy to keep "the friends of France" in power in Africa.

#### 4. *Aided from Accra?*

In the immediate aftermath of the assassination and the coup, however, a third explanation circulated through Lomé, Accra, and other West African capitals. According to these rumors, the “somebody” whom Nigerian foreign minister Jaja Wachuku had envisaged behind the coup was neither Mazoyer, Maïtrier, nor Foccart. Rather, it was Kwame Nkrumah, president of the neighbouring republic of Ghana. These rumors were deemed plausible for three reasons.

Firstly, whilst Olympio was negotiating the end of the United Nations trusteeship agreement and French administration in the period April 1958 to April 1960, Nkrumah had expressed publicly and repeatedly his belief that the future of Togo lay not in independent nationhood, but in a political and economic union with Ghana (Welch 1966: 115 and 139-47). This did not bode well for Ghana’s future relations with an independent Togo. Speaking at Ho in December 1960, Nkrumah emphasised the artificiality of the colonial border, which had separated “our own kith and kin”. He was unapologetic about the “recent trade restrictions [which] have been imposed [by Ghana on the now independent Togo] to bring home clearly and unmistakeably that union of Ghana and Togoland is natural and inevitable” (Nkrumah, 19 December 1960, as cited in Obeng 1979: 235). For Nkrumah, a Ghana-Togo union would be an opportunity to demonstrate and concretise his own “devotion to the cause of African Unity”.

Secondly, and partly by way of response, Olympio’s party declared itself committed not only to the preservation of Togolese national sovereignty, but also to the reopening of the Ghana-Togo border question. The dispute hinged on the status of the former United Nations trust territory of British Togoland, which had lain between French Togoland and the British colony of the Gold Coast. British Togoland had been integrated into the Gold Coast/Ghana at the latter’s Independence from Britain in 1957 – a solution which was advantageous to Ghana, to the extent that it gave the Ghana government control over both the east and west banks of the river Volta. Olympio’s party criticised the process by which the future of British Togoland had been determined, and insisted that the disputed territory should be “reunified” with the Republic of Togo. The Togolese foreign minister, Paulin Freitas, brought the problem of the border to the attention of the United Nations.<sup>10</sup> As Nkrumah’s economic strategy hinged on the generation of power from a hydro-electric dam on the river Volta (Miescher 2014), the Ghana government could not afford to lose control of this territory to a neighbouring country.

Finally, the Ghana government had formally accused the Togo government of harbouring dangerous political exiles and either assisting, or at least failing to clamp down upon, their plots against the Ghana government. The Togo government was accused of abetting the notorious attempt on Nkrumah’s life at

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<sup>10</sup> Freitas’ arguments at the United Nations are summarised in Centre des archives diplomatiques, Nantes (hereafter CADN), Lomé ambassade 61: C. Mantel, Ambassade de France au Togo to Diplomatie, Paris, 6 Oct 1961; and the response from Paris to the Togo embassy, 7 Oct 1961. I have addressed these arguments at length elsewhere (Skinner 2015).

Kulungugu in August 1962 (by sheltering the prime suspect), and of complicity in the bomb attacks that afflicted Accra through the autumn and winter of 1962. In a series of notes exchanged between the two governments in December 1962, the Ghana government had also indicated its position on regime change – force was justified when other means had failed and when the “desire to end an unpopular regime is backed by the will of the people” (as cited in Thompson 1969: 308-9; see Gerits 2015 for an alternative perspective).

In the light of this rather public hostility, then, several West African politicians seem to have believed it was possible that Nkrumah himself, or members of his government, had conspired with Togolese political exiles living in Accra and had encouraged or supplied the insurrectionists in a bid to remove Olympio. This possibility, along with several others, was discussed between 24 and 26 January 1963 at an emergency meeting in Lagos of the Inter-African and Malagasy states. The government of Nigeria took extremely seriously the possibility that the uncertainties generated by the coup would provide a pretext for a Ghanaian annexation of Togo – a concern reflected in foreign minister Jaja Wachuku’s official statement that the Ghana-Togo border was Nigeria’s own border “for the purpose of security” (*Africa Report* 1 February 1963: 9).

Accusations against Nkrumah and his government circulated widely in 1963. They were reported by journalists and correspondents working for a range of newspapers within and beyond Africa; they were noted by diplomatic representatives of “western” and other African countries; and they were addressed in early studies in African political science and international relations (Welch 1966; Mazrui 1968; Thompson 1969; Akinyemi 1975). Yet these versions of events have received scant attention in the more recent scholarship on Nkrumah’s foreign policy and his pan-African project.

### 5. Why the historiographical gap?

One explanation for the gap between contemporary accusations and more recent scholarship is that future generations could not take very seriously the accusation that Nkrumah was complicit in the assassination of Olympio and the Togo coup. There is indeed no logical connection between Nkrumah’s agenda for Africa and the outcomes in Togo. Even if Nkrumah was motivated to act against Olympio, why would he have wished to see Grunitzky restored to power? Grunitzky’s party, along with that of Antoine Meatchi, had benefitted from French manipulation of electoral contests in Togo between 1952 and 1956, before both were ousted by a more radical anti-colonial alliance in the United Nations-supervised elections of April 1958 (Amenumey 1989: 156-64 and 285-336). If “somebody” had wished to see Grunitzky restored to power in 1963, the subsequent turn of events surely pointed not to Nkrumah, but to the French.

A focus on French neo-colonial motivations and opportunities for action in Togo is more attractive for a researcher seeking logical connections between events over time. It also facilitates the location of Togolese events within a substantial body of historical and political-scientific research on the demise of the French

empire and its damaging aftermath. (Golan 1981; Chafer & Jenkins 1996; Chafer 2002; Chafer & Keese 2013; Cooper 2014 are but a sample of key works published in English. Bat 2012 consolidates, critiques and extends many earlier studies published in French.) Given that Olympio was *not* the anointed successor of the outgoing French administration, but the popular leader of a victimised nationalist movement, he resists categorisation as a puppet or stooge president. It was in fact Olympio's Togolese *opponents* who had enjoyed French favour through much of the 1950s. So when some of these same opponents showed up as political exiles in Nkrumah's Ghana in the early 1960s, they brought no socialist or pan-African credentials along with them, and it is not at all obvious why they should have been supported.

When the Olympio assassination and 1963 coup are considered in the context of Togo's relations with its former European administering power (that is, within something akin to a [post]colony-metropole framework), a hypothesis quickly suggests itself: the French had never liked Olympio and always preferred Grunitzky, thus when soldierly discontent offered them an opportunity to rearrange matters more to their liking, they took it, and benefitted from it thereafter. Armed with this hypothesis, the researcher can sally forth with confidence to the well-endowed French national archives in search of evidence to confirm or deny. Conversely, the researcher who considers the Olympio assassination and the coup in the context of inter-African relations, and acknowledges the contingency and porosity of national borders, may quickly find him/herself mired in contradictions and struggling with the dispersion and discontinuities of Africa's postcolonial archives.

A Ghana-centric analysis of West Africa's first coup has proved unattractive as a focus of historical research. This is not surprising given that it seems illogical in the light of subsequent events, unheroic when compared to the study of solidarities between freedom fighters, and difficult to test against a bank of reliable empirical data in well-resourced or extensively digitised public archives. But this begs the question of why a Ghana-centric explanation was ever taken seriously at all, and how it features in the early political-scientific and international relations research on Africa. Is this merely symptomatic of the Cold War context in which such research was conducted? Does it reflect the biases that were embedded in later twentieth-century US apparatus of knowledge production - about international relations in general, and the African continent in particular (Skinner 1976; Sutton & Smock 1976; Vitalis 2015)? Was it just a thinly disguised attempt to discredit Nkrumah?

Thompson attributed more significance to Ghana-Togo relations than any scholar before or since. Indeed Thompson argued that "no state was to be more important to Ghana than Togo" (1969: 10). He identified in Togolese affairs early tests of Nkrumah's statesmanship and Ghanaian statecraft. Describing Nkrumah as "charismatic but unintelligent" (87), Thompson elaborated on how Ghana's interactions with Togo had "weakened its prestige throughout Africa" (81), and concluded that "Ghana was to fail no test more thoroughly than this one" (81). Having interviewed former Ghanaian ministers, ambassadors, and foreign policy advisors, Thompson appears to have taken it as axiomatic that

The plots against Olympio of 1961 had been financed by Ghana, and after [the August 1962 assassination attempt on Nkrumah at] Kulungugu...there was increased pressure by Ghanaian militants in Flagstaff House to try once again to depose the Togolese government; Nkrumah was receptive to the idea....(1969: 308)

Highlighting the (uncorroborated and post facto) testimony of an individual who claimed he had been sent by Nkrumah with orders to organise the assassination Olympio, Thompson suggested that there was indeed a Ghanaian plot in January 1963. But he concluded that these conspirators had been overtaken by events in Lomé – that is, by the initiatives of Togolese soldiers and ex-servicemen, “whatever the extent of French complicity” (1969: 313). In Thompson’s account, Nkrumah appeared receptive to conspiracies against neighbouring governments, but not competent enough to see them through; thus Nkrumah thoroughly undermined his own position in the crucial build-up to the first meeting of the Organization of African Unity in May 1963.

#### *6. Any answers from the archives?*

Thompson conducted his research in the later 1960s, in the aftermath of the coup that topped the Nkrumah regime in February 1966. At this point, there seemed little prospect of accessing complete series of records from relevant government ministries, departments, or agencies in Ghana, not least because some of them were deliberately destroyed (Grilli 2017). Thompson relied heavily on interviews, as well as on press coverage, and on documentation provided to him by individuals (1969: 441-3). Since then, the records of the many countries that had diplomatic representation in Ghana have become available in public archives, and provide some avenues through which Thompson’s picture of Nkrumah’s foreign policy, and Ghana-Togo relations in particular, might be revisited.

Like other researchers who have engaged with French and US embassy records, I quickly became aware that multiple ministries, departments, and agencies (foreign affairs, defense, aid / co-operation, intelligence) had a stake in their respective government’s relations with, and activities in, any given African country. The embassies were by all means important nodes which absorbed, produced, and disseminated a substantial volume of information. But they also belonged in a much larger state apparatus. Within and between ministries, departments, and agencies, individuals operated with differing levels of knowledge and influence, and generated competing assessments of opportunities and threats. The problem, then, is not a paucity of information about French and US relations with Ghana and Togo, or an absence of insight into the kinds of calculations made by elected or unelected officials. Rather, the problem is that it is difficult to be sure which individual(s) exercised the most power at a given moment, how exactly they translated their ideas into action, and who/what else might have intervened.

The records of the French embassies in Accra and Lomé help to crystallise the French dilemma in Togo. It is clear that ambassador Mazoyer disliked Olympio intensely, and had no enthusiasm for propping up his government. At the same time, however, Mazoyer recognised the possibility that, should Olympio fall, the ensuing uncertainty might provide a pretext for a Ghanaian annexation of Togo – a risk which he regarded as significant threat to French interests across West Africa.<sup>11</sup> In order to grasp how the French government responded to the increasingly tense situation in Togo, and particular role played by the head of the secretariat of African Affairs, historians have turned to the “archives Foccart”. Bat (2006), drawing from Geneste (2003), explained how the “archives Foccart” were constituted, and how they could be compared with other sets of records, including those of the French foreign ministry, so as to generate well-evidenced assessments of the French role in Africa.

Heeding Bat’s advice, Keese undertook a thorough search of the French repositories. From this Keese concluded that “Foccart was a boaster” and that his network in the early 1960s was in fact still “rudimentary” (2007: 594). Looking more specifically at French agendas in Togo and Guinea, Keese concluded that there are “no real proofs that the French were behind the crisis that Togo went through in early 1963” (2008: 525). Implicitly acknowledging that the absence of documentation does not, in itself, rule out the possibility of anti-Olympio actions or intent, Keese nonetheless insisted that,

We do not have concrete clue that either the French Foreign Ministry or the Secretariat of African Affairs attempted actively to topple the Togo government.... We cannot be certain that the French ambassador Henri Mazoyer did not encourage leading [Togolese] army officers to get rid of Olympio, but there is no documentation indicating that the Ambassador received any instructions or support for such an activity from the Quai d’Orsay or from Jacques Foccart (2008: 525-6).

The US government records are similarly challenging, and there are significant scholarly disagreements about the extent to which US interest in Africa changed through the presidencies of Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy (Nwaubani 2003). Muelhenbeck argues that Kennedy advocated a more robust and autonomous US approach to Africa than that pursued by Eisenhower. The former had been “publicly hostile towards ‘premature independence’ [in Africa]” and content to assign to France the responsibility for keeping its former colonies out of the Soviet orbit (Muelhenbeck 2012: 6). The Kennedy administration, by contrast, opened embassies in all but one of the newly independent African nations, and initiated aid programmes to all twelve of the African states that achieved independence from France in 1960 (160-1).

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<sup>11</sup> CADN, Lomé Ambassade 59: Télégramme, Diplomatie, Paris to Ambassade de la France au Togo, 12 December 1962; handwritten notes describing the fears that Olympio had outlined to President Maga of Dahomey, including the following statement: “If Togo is attacked, it is essential for us [the French] that our military pact is seen, in the eyes of other African heads of state, to be efficacious.”

From the perspective of Kennedy, Olympio must surely have been an ideal African leader. Olympio's track record of protest and mobilisation against the French administration identified him unambiguously as an anti-colonial nationalist, and not as a French lackey. At the same time, Olympio was very clearly *not* a socialist, and as such he could be comfortably accommodated within Kennedy's efforts to expand US influence in Africa through the cultivation of "personal diplomacy" (Muelhenbeck 2012: 49). Olympio's visit to the White House in March 1962 cemented his reputation as a "friendly" African leader whose vision might be compatible with that of the US government. A more extensive search of the State Department records, however, raises the question of just how much weight the warm relations between the two presidents would carry when the chips were down.

Muelhenbeck points out that in the immediate aftermath of the Olympio assassination, the White House rebuked William De Pree (of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research) for suggesting that the US government should wait and see how the situation developed (2012: 161). De Pree was told that "a policy of doing nothing" was inappropriate under a Kennedy administration. The US embassy records from Lomé, however, allow another insight into the US dilemma.

The US ambassador Leon Poullada reminded the State Department that, shortly before he was assassinated, Olympio had secured from Nigerian foreign minister Jaja Wachuku a commitment to defend Togo against any Ghanaian attempt at annexation. Poullada further noted that the (now deposed) Togolese interior minister Théophile Mally had produced, on the day before the Togo coup, an unverified report that Nkrumah had already "bought off" the commanding officer of the Togolese army.<sup>12</sup> Conjuring up the worst case scenario of a "free-for-all Donnybrook", Poullada pointed out that should the Nigerians attempt to restore the former Togolese government, the French might cite their defense agreements with Togo, and their duty to defend its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, so as to justify a military intervention.<sup>13</sup>

But the desire to avoid this kind of "free-for-all Donnybrook" had to be weighed against a desire to preserve US relations with other "friendly" African leaders. This is probably why Secretary of State Dean Rusk approved a secret memorandum recommending that the US government recognise the provisional Togo government, but delay its announcement of recognition "until a substantial number of African states have actually taken such action."<sup>14</sup> These considerations did not quite lead the US government into "a policy of doing

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<sup>12</sup> NARA, RG 59, Box 1948, file 770.D 00, 22 Jan 1963: Telegram from Poullada to Secretary of State, dated 23 Jan 1963, and written in response to reports emerging from the US embassy in Cotonou.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> NARA, RG 59, Box 1948, file 770.D 00, 22 Jan 1963: Secret memorandum on Recognition of New Togolese Provisional Government, approved by Dean Rusk and stamped 21 Jan 1963.



nothing.” But they limited the US government’s room for manoeuvre and inhibited an open or enthusiastic backing of Grunitzky.<sup>15</sup>

The meeting of Inter-African and Malagasy heads of state in Lagos from 24 to 26 January 1963 raised another difficulty for the United States. Here, Théophile Mally claimed that *both* the Ghanaians *and* the French had played a part in the coup: the former had actively conspired, by distributing money and providing arms to those willing to partake in an insurrection; the latter had “taken advantage of the situation” by failing to prevent the distribution of arms or to warn Olympio, and by promising soldiers that they would receive better conditions from a new Togo government.<sup>16</sup> On 25 January, Removille (a Quai d’Orsay official with responsibility for Togolese affairs) approached the US embassy in Paris. He sought to convince the embassy officer that “a widely publicized assassination investigation would serve no purpose.” He suggested that the US, UK, and French governments should instead “all counsel moderation to other African states in the hope that the latter will leave Togo alone long enough for Grunitzky Government [to] control its own extremists and solidify its position.”<sup>17</sup>

Ambassador Poullada was not convinced that the French embassy had been transparent in its dealings.<sup>18</sup> In his view, the French had committed several sins of omission – first, by failing to speed up the payment of pensions to Togolese ex-servicemen and thereby alleviate pressure on Olympio to integrate them into the Togolese army; second, by failing to notify the US embassy immediately the coup was underway; and third, by failing to share with the US and other “friendly” embassies all the moves it was intending to make in regard to the provisional government. However, although Poullada found this French behavior “regrettable”, he claimed that his embassy had “assiduously tried to kill anti-French rumors and dispel suspicions”, and vowed that he would “continue [to] seek close and friendly relations.”<sup>19</sup> When push came to shove, the US ambassador, and indeed the Secretary of State, did not wish to cross the French in Togo.

A close reading of the embassy records, then, would lead one to believe that the US pursued a “friendly” but ultimately cautious or even non-committal approach in Togo, despite Kennedy’s aspirations for a more robust and autonomous US approach to Africa, and despite his warm personal relationship with Olympio. But this picture might not withstand a thorough inspection of the activities of the US Central Intelligence Agency. Whilst Thompson (1969: 308) gave ready

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<sup>15</sup> NARA, RG 59, Box 1948, file 770D.00 22 Jan 1963: Outgoing telegram from the State Department to a wide range of US embassies in Africa, dated 22 Jan 1963, summarizing the dilemma, and emphasizing that US recognition of provisional Togo government should be “guided by the views of friendly African states”.

<sup>16</sup> NARA, RG 59, Box 1948, file 770D.00 22 Jan 1963: Telegram from US embassy, Lagos, to State Department, dated 25 Jan 1963.

<sup>17</sup> NARA, RG 59, Box 1948, file 770D.00 22 Jan 1963: Telegram from US embassy, Paris, to State Department, dated 25 Jan 1963.

<sup>18</sup> NARA, RG 59, Box 1948, file 770D.00 22 Jan 1963: Poullada to State Department, dated 26 Jan 1963.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

consideration to any evidence of Ghanaian subversion in Togo, he was sceptical of Nkrumah's repeated accusations that plots against the Ghana government were being hatched on Togolese soil. Thompson acknowledged that after Kulungugu, a series of bomb attacks were carried out in Ghana - indeed the last of these occurred just one week before Olympio was assassinated - but Thompson was more interested in critiquing Nkrumah's reactions to the attacks than investigating their origins. The implication, then, was that Nkrumah was paranoid, and unstatesman-like, in his accusations.

Montgomery's more recent (2004) research into Ghana-US-UK relations brings to mind Joseph Heller's dictum, in *Catch 22*, that "just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't after you". After studying the records of the US State Department; files pertaining to Ghana in the presidential libraries of Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson; and UK foreign office and embassy records, Montgomery believed it *possible* that "the accepted argument that Nkrumah falsely accused Togo of harboring and supporting the military training of Ghanaian refugees is wrong, and Olympio did actively support US intelligence activities in Togo directed at Ghana" (2004: 210). She also warned, however, that some of the US government "documents that make reference to a possible coup [to topple the Nkrumah government] have been heavily censored or removed from the files" (2004: 208) - a phenomenon we also noted in our reading of the correspondence between the State Department and the US embassy in Lomé.

Ironically, then, whilst the records of the French and US governments are voluminous, and neatly catalogued in well-resourced national archives, they are also dissatisfying. They do not reveal the decisive execution of a conspiracy in Togo, or even a coherent and consistent French or US agenda. Rather, these archives bring home the complexity of policy-making; the possibilities for competing and contradictory agendas; and the considerable potential for unedifying or inconvenient information to be swept under the carpet.

### 7. *Doing more with less in Africa's postcolonial archives*

The conclusion that French and US archives are dissatisfying may be comforting to historians of postcolonial Africa who have been forced to let go of expectations of archival completeness and coherence - both in the quest for "whole series" of papers for ministries, departments, and agencies; and in the reading of individual files as windows on to a linear process of agenda-implementation-outcome. The reader of incomplete archives is thus incentivised to "do more with less" - to go deeper in the analysis of each fragment, and wider in search of the connections between one fragment and actual, potential, or absent others (Bernault 2015). This seems particularly pertinent to the study of subversive political activities across national borders. What kinds of fragments, then, are available to a historian seeking to revisit the Olympio assassination and the Togo coup? How might they help us to evaluate Mally's accusation (reiterated in a modified form by Thompson), that there was indeed a Ghana-based conspiracy at work, albeit one that came unstuck?

Scholars of Ghana's foreign policy are well aware that responsibilities were spread across several bodies. Following the death in 1959 of George Padmore, Nkrumah's first key advisor on African affairs, Ghana's foreign policy apparatus shifted several times (Grilli 2018: 165-211). A basic split can be discerned between the Ministry of External Affairs and the Foreign Service, on the one hand, and the African Affairs Committee, on the other. The latter was chaired by Nkrumah and met weekly at Flagstaff House. It assumed oversight for the Bureau of African Affairs (which gradually absorbed the All-African Peoples' Conference secretariat) and the African Affairs Centre (which provided support to freedom fighters on the continent), and it worked towards the establishment of the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute at Winneba (Grilli 2015: 101-16). This multiplicity of institutions points to the generation of a large volume of documentation - much of it produced by a new cohort of female clerical workers (Ahlman 2012) - and thus to challenges similar to those that we identified above vis-à-vis the French and US archives. In Ghana, however, many records were deliberately destroyed in the coup that toppled Nkrumah in 1966, whilst others were not well preserved, thoroughly catalogued, or made accessible to researchers in public archives (Grilli 2017: 298-9).

Fortunately, archivist Joseph Mensah (1990) kick-started a process of recovering, cataloguing, and rendering accessible the papers of the Bureau of African Affairs at the George Padmore Research Library, Accra (as described in Grilli 2017). Meanwhile, some other papers pertaining to Nkrumah's pan-African policy have been catalogued under series RG17, and made accessible through the Public Records and Archives Administration search room (PRAAD) in Accra. Intelligence reports for the first half of the 1960s were stored in the PRAAD building in Ho (Volta Region), under series VR2. These fragmentary records can be put together with new research on political movements in early independent Togo (Skinner & Yayoh, forthcoming) to revisit three key points of contention in existing accounts of the Togo coup.

Firstly, they confirm that there was indeed a series of Ghanaian attempts to weaken and pressurise Olympio's government over several years before the coup (although this does not prove either that Nkrumah conspired to have Olympio assassinated, or that a conspiracy was successfully executed).<sup>20</sup> More importantly, they demonstrate that Nkrumah was willing to engage with the conservative elements in the Togolese opposition.<sup>21</sup> This offers a potential answer to the longstanding and vexed question of why Nkrumah might have backed, or at least tolerated, Grunitzky: it was a pragmatic (although ultimately

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<sup>20</sup> Public Records and Archives Administration Department (hereafter PRAAD), Accra. RG 17/1/131 Togoland: report by Mumuni Bawumia to Osagyefo, 7 Jan 1961, on his efforts to influence the outcomes of the 1961 Togo elections - although these elections did not work out along the lines that Bawumia expected. For strategic concerns about Togo, and a series of proposed measures to create pressure on the Olympio government, see RG 17/1/434 Special Committee Togoland Affairs: Dei-Anang to Nkrumah, 12 Dec 1961, and minutes of the first committee meeting, 29 Dec 1961.

<sup>21</sup> PRAAD, Accra, RG 17/1/131 Togoland: Grunitzky to Nkrumah, 17 Nov 1962, referring to their meeting in Accra on 4 Nov 1962. Dr Simon Kpodar also attended this meeting. (In May 1961, Mally had accused Kpodar of receiving Czech-manufactured pistols, via Ghana, in a plot to assassinate Olympio.)

misguided) calculation that Grunitzky could replace Olympio in the immediate term, until the more radical and left-wing elements in Togo's variegated political opposition could be strengthened.

Secondly, the evidentiary fragments suggest that, whether or not he was behind the Togo coup, Nkrumah sought to exploit the opportunity to propose a treaty to the provisional Togo government. This treaty was accompanied by a secret annexure which, had it been signed, would have ceded a very significant measure of Togo's national sovereignty and, in effect, ushered in Nkrumah's long-desired Ghana-Togo Union, whilst deliberately disguising its implications from the Togolese public.<sup>22</sup> The treaty and secret annexure are significant documents, because they provide us with a possible explanation for why Nkrumah moved rapidly to official diplomatic recognition of the provisional Togo government at a time when many other African leaders were resisting immediate recognition and calling for an investigation into the assassination.

Thirdly, the Ghanaian records confirm that Nkrumah's rapid recognition of the provisional Togo government, outside of any collective agreement with other African heads of state, became a bone of contention in the build-up to the May 1963 meetings of African foreign ministers and heads of state in Addis Ababa (a point also emphasised by Grilli 2018: 265-73). In particular, this soured Nkrumah's relationship with President Sekou Touré of Guinea, who strongly opposed the representation of the Togo government at the meetings that established the Organization of African Unity.<sup>23</sup> And it stimulated a bitter, but unresolved, debate within the Organization of African Unity about whether diplomatic recognition of unelected governments should be a matter for each individual nation-state or a matter for collective, pan-African decision-making (Akinyemi 1975).

## 8. Conclusion

Ultimately, this article has not proved that "somebody" other than soldiers and ex-servicemen was behind the assassination of Olympio and the toppling of his government. But my exploration of Togo's "shadow archives" has revealed that the US, French *and* Ghana governments (like the new Grunitzky administration), all had a strong vested interest in a "military / non-ideological" explanation of West Africa's first coup. This convenient explanation was later taken up in political-scientific analyses of coups across Africa. But in 1963, the "military / non-ideological" explanation failed to allay the concerns of other African leaders, and scepticism was not confined to the Inter-African and Malagasy states, or to those who were predisposed against Nkrumah.

Accusations of both French and Ghanaian complicity were made during the period that African leaders debated the terms on which they could work together in a continental, pan-African organisation. Togo's "shadow archives" certainly

<sup>22</sup> A copy of the treaty and secret annexure was found in PRAAD, RG 17/2/814.

<sup>23</sup> PRAAD RG 17/1/131 Togoland: letter from Nkrumah to Grunitzky, 28 May 1963, recounting his dispute with Sekou Touré around the representation of the Togo at Addis Ababa.

permit some direct insights into “western” governments’ accounts of and responses to West Africa’s first coup. But what they can tell us, however indirectly, about African responses to these events is crucial in understanding the build-up to key meetings of African foreign ministers and heads of government in Addis Ababa five months later. These meetings culminated in Charter of the Organization of African Unity. Historical understanding of the charter’s emphasis on respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, the subsequent fixing of borders as they were at Independence, and the emergence of particular patterns of diplomatic recognition and collective action on the African continent, could be significantly enhanced by renewed and more critical reflection on West Africa’s first coup. This will be explored further in my ongoing research.

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